

31 December 1969

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SITUATION INFORMATION REPORTVenceremos Brigade Update

While most Americans spend year-end holidays at home or with friends, and several thousands more devote themselves to low-key, hometown anti-war vigils, sing-ins, and peace demonstrations, another much smaller group will be hacking and stacking sugar cane in Cuba's Havana Province. These will be predominantly Black Panthers and members of Students for a Democratic Society, plus other radicalized American youth, all sharing pro-Castro sentiments and opposing what they term U. S. imperialism.

The first Venceremos Brigade contingent was comprised of 216 Americans. Geographically, California's Bay Area provided 50 to 100 youth; 30 came from the Seattle area; D. C. supplied 12; and the remainder came from the New York-Boston and Detroit-Chicago complexes. The average age of Brigade members is in the early twenties, with some teenagers, and a few older men. They paid their own transportation (from personal or contributed funds) to Mexico City during the first week in December, where they immediately boarded Cubana Airline planes for the flight to Havana. Dwight Hankin, 19-year-old Detroit black, was spokesman at the airport for the first group of 74. About 70 percent of the volunteers are white, despite organizers' efforts to attract equal groups of white, black, and brown youth. Half of the travelers are women.

The Brigade "campamento" (tent camp) is located near Aquacate, about a two-hour bus ride from Havana. Its director is Javier Ardizones, international relations coordinator for the Young Communist League, who told the volunteers their presence helped to destroy the U. S. attempts to "Blockade Cuba from the rest of the world." His listeners cheered when they learned the Cuban harvest was dedicated to the people of Vietnam. Afterwards, Americans were issued work shirts, trousers and shoes.

A typical workday begins with the 6:00 a. m. bugle, followed by breakfast (rolls, coffee and milk). Then the 10 sub-Brigades - consisting of Americans and Cuban counterparts (members of a

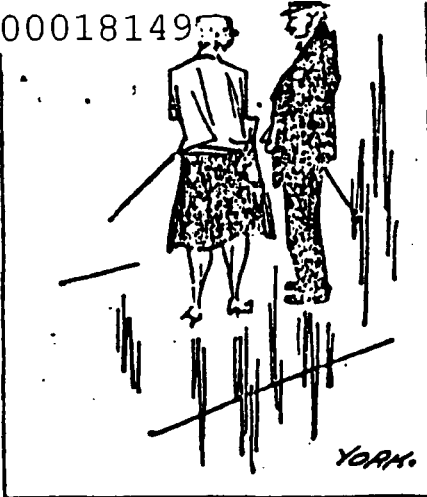
specially formed Cuban Brigade) - march to the worksite, each under a distinctive unit banner. A 7-hour day, 5 1/2 day week is the norm.

Some problems surfaced almost immediately. When women were designated cane stackers, rather than cane cutters like the men, they protested, feeling it might be discrimination. Locals explained both jobs were equally important and productivity would be the determining factor in who did what. Cuba's "emulation" incentive system nettled some Americans. It smacked of "capitalist competition," they felt. This was quickly overcome, according to one radical press report, and the volunteers soon "caught the revolutionary spirit" and worked to out-produce other sub-brigades. Winner of the first week's "Vanguard" cane-cutter award was Charles "Woody" Woodson, 29-year-old San Franciscan. Production for the first two weeks was 194,933 arrobas (an arroba equals 25 pounds of cut cane). Leading "macheteros" besides Woodson, are Clyde Kelly, Clarence "Chip" Sills, Leslie Cagan (or Kagan) and Carol Ann Gilbert. With typical socialist showmanship, week-end ceremonies are held to award individuals and unit merit badges and flags, usually presented by a national labor hero.

Brigade members will work for 6 weeks. The final two weeks of the two-month visit are reserved for recreation including a tour of Cuba, during which cameras and recorders will be busy. Propaganda drums are beginning to beat louder. Havana's Prensa Latina carries taped messages, in English and Spanish, from Brigade members. Mike LaGuardia and Joan Gandini are the interviewers. Three Bostonians, Michael Kaysahn, Neil Birnbaum and Richard Cord (all phonetic) told their friends in the U. S. how Cuba's struggle against U. S. imperialism (typified by the U. S. blockade-breaking harvest) is "the same struggle that we will fight when we get back to the United States." Tom Lee, a Detroit, wanted to get back home soon to fight against U. S. repression against liberation movements like the Black Panthers.

Undoubtedly, international publicity about the Brigade will increase in January. A major publisher, one observer notes, has contracted to compile a book based on the diaries of interested Brigade members. And a recent news broadcast told of Fidel Castro's visit to the Venceremos camp on Christmas Day (Castro had officially postponed Cuban Christmas festivities until July to allow uninterrupted harvesting operations).

A second Venceremos contingent, hoped to contain about 400 American volunteers, is expected in Havana in early February.

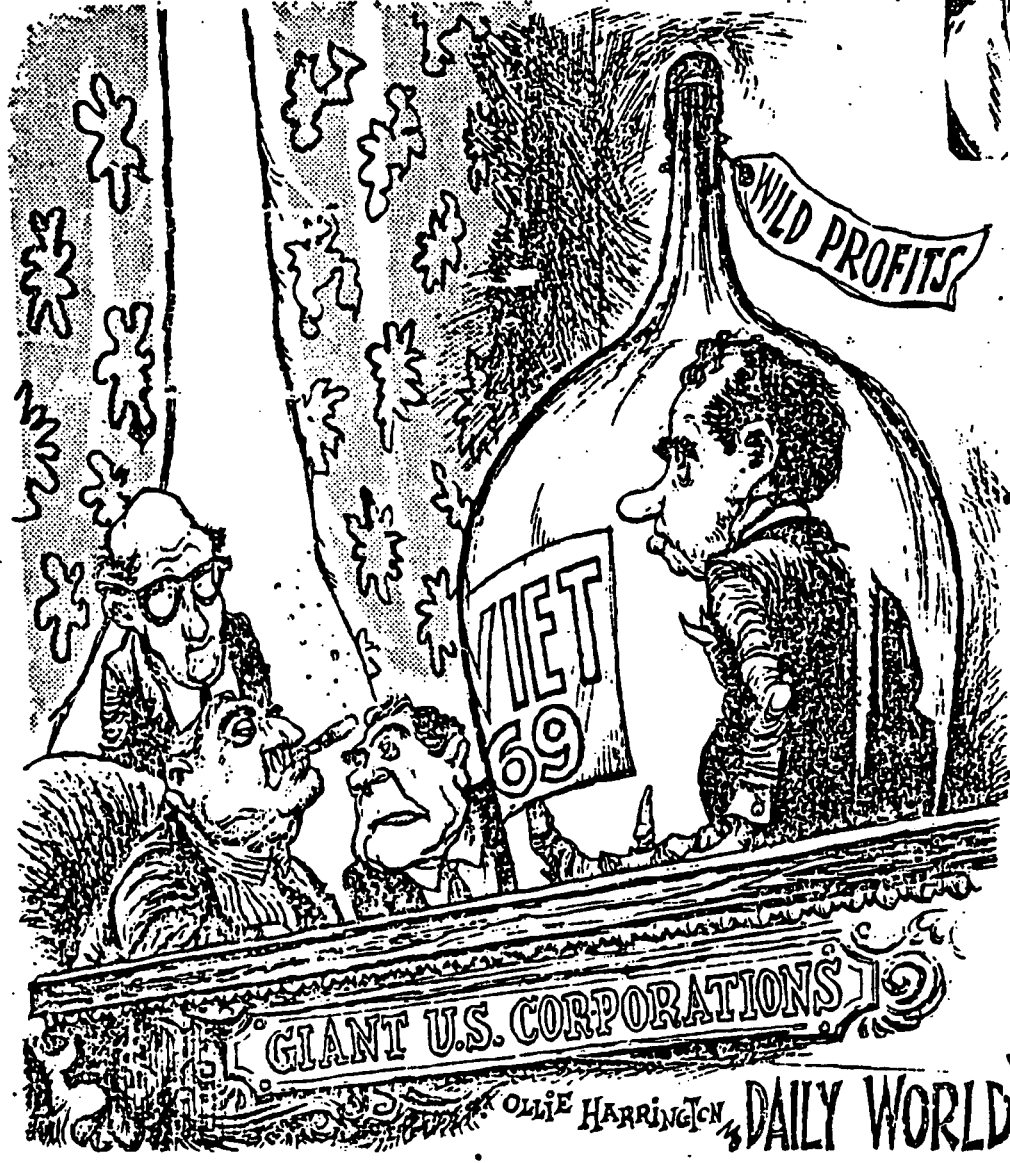


BERRY'S WORLD



"Somebody said I don't have 'chutzpah.' Find out what it is and let me know if I should get some."

"Johnny has been restless since Vietnam. He doesn't know whether to volunteer for Cornell or Berkeley."

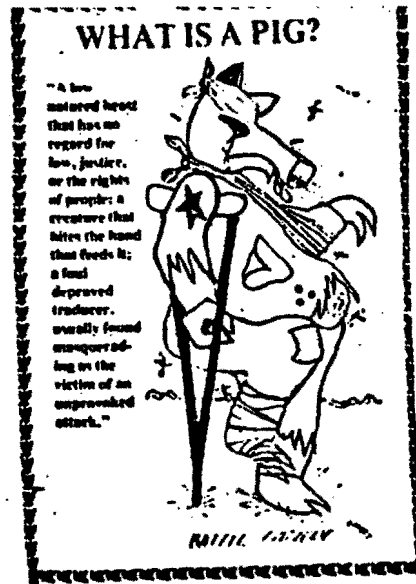


The Militant 12 Dec 69



Your blessings  
(while appreciated)  
won't help  
Underground Press

"Gentlemen, we gotta get our boy out'a there. And without breakin' that there bottle!"



Greeting cards advertised in "The Black Panther" newspaper - size=4 x 5 inches, price - \$.15 each.



"Okay, Baby, that takes care of the Geeks. Now send up the Black Panthers!"

CALENDAR OF TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED ACTIVITIES

Asterisked items are either reported for the first time, or contain additions or changes to previously reported activities.

\*1970

A confidential source of a Government agency has advised that the Black Panther Party is planning some form of unspecified action early in 1970 on a national level to show the Government that the Panthers mean business. No details regarding the nature of the action or the form it will take are currently available. FBI 9/110

\*January 9-11, 1970, Chicago, Illinois

The CPUSA has disseminated a document entitled "A Call to Found a Revolutionary Working Class Youth Organization." The founding convention of this new Marxist-Leninist Youth organization was originally scheduled for December 26-28, 1969. Later materials indicate it is now planned for 9-11 or 10-12 January 1970.

The stated purpose of this new, communist-oriented youth organization will be to replace the W. E. B. DuBois Clubs and draw membership from the Young Socialist Alliance. "Intimate contact" will be maintained by the group with the CPUSA.

F.C.I. Ct. Analysis 30 Oct-69 Daily World 22 Nov-69

REF 9357  
23 Dec-69

\*January 15, Washington, D. C.

A series of ceremonies and religious services will be conducted to mark the birth of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Despite repeated pressure on Congress, it has not been declared a legal holiday. Wash. Daily News 25 Dec-69

\*January 18, New York City

The American Association to Combat Fascism, Racism, and Anti-Semitism has issued a call for a January 18 conference in New York City at the Penn-Garden Hotel, 7th Avenue, and 31st Street from 10 a. m. to 5 p. m. The call highlighted the "danger of the ultra-right and facism at home and abroad" and, among other

things, states that over 400 ultra-right organizations and outlets are encouraged by the military-industrial complex, and the Nixon administration attacks on the news media and hints of censorship.

*Daily World 17 Dec. 69*

January 19, 1970, Bel Air, Maryland

H. Rap Brown, head of the Student National Coordinating Committee, who has been free on \$10,000 bond in connection with charges stemming from racial disorders in July 1967 on Maryland's Eastern Shore, is tentatively scheduled to be tried on 19 January 1970. William B. Kunstler, Brown's attorney to defend him on the charges of arson and inciting to riot, is also chief counsel for the Chicago Eight.

*Wash. Post 5 Nov. 69*

\*January 23-25, Detroit, Michigan

Reportedly, a Republic of New Africa (RNA) conference was held on November 29, 1969, in Brooklyn, New York, and was attended by approximately forty individuals. The conference voted to hold a constitutional convention in Detroit, Michigan, on 24 January. At the conference, the resignation of Robert F. Williams as RNA President was announced. The RNA is a violence-prone black extremist, separatist organization headquartered in Detroit, Michigan. Robert Williams currently resides in Detroit where he is awaiting extradition to North Carolina, on a kidnapping charge. It has been reported that the RNA is currently split into three factions. It is headed by Pontiac, Michigan, black militant attorney, Milton R. Henry, who acted as its leader in past years while Williams was in exile. Henry will probably run for the RNA presidency at the convention.

*FBI 95122 Detroit News 4 Dec. 69*

\*February 1970, Washington, D. C.

A second Freedom Rally supporting the U. S. position in the Vietnam War will be held at Constitution Hall. The February rally, to be held indoors because of unpredictable winter weather, will hopefully, according to organizers, have a number of "big name entertainers" as well as Senators and Congressmen at the events.

*Wash. Daily News 21 Nov. 69*

\*February 4: Nationwide

The Committee of Returned Volunteers, which has been active in protesting the war in Vietnam, plans to sponsor nationwide demonstrations against the Gulf Oil Corporation on 4 February. A spokesman for the Committee said that the Gulf Oil Corporation was selected because of its holdings in Africa which are "exploiting the African

People." The Committee is also considering a "National action" in Washington, D. C., during the summer of 1970; the type of action has not been decided upon. FBI 6568 543895

\*February 12, 13, 14, Washington, D. C.

The Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam will hold a mass student conference 12, 13, and 14 February to plan national anti-war demonstrations this spring. The site will probably be in Washington, D. C. Wash. Star 14 Dec. 69

\*February 21, 22, and 23, San Pedro, California

The Peace and Freedom Party held their pre-convention at the YMCA, 1530 Buchanan Street, San Francisco, on November 28, 29, and 30. Attendance varied from a low of 15 to a high of 40 persons. Candidates for political office were discussed. There was much disagreement, shouting, and the use of four letter words; however, they finally set a date and place for their state convention. At present the Peace and Freedom Party is very splintered and at a low ebb. i used summary 4-11 Dec. 69 #103

\*March 27, April 15, and May 30, Nationally

Although plans are still not definite, there is strong likelihood that the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam will settle on these dates to sponsor nationwide demonstrations against the war. Unlike the November 15 peace march in Washington, November 15, these activities will be decentralized to cities all over the country.

On March 27 (Good Friday), the theme will be opposition to the draft; on April 15 (Income Tax day), among other things, supporters will be urged to withhold what they feel are "war taxes"; and on May 30 (Memorial Day), support will be given to GI's for Peace in Vietnam. Wash. News 18 Dec. 69

\*April 22, National

A National Teach-In on the Crisis of the Environment is being planned for college campuses. According to the teach-in's planners, the objective is to mobilize young Americans in support of a campaign to halt the "accelerating pollution and destruction of the environment." Daily World 22 Nov 69

SOURCE: Government and news media.

RELIABILITY: Probably true.